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ABSTRACT

Previous research has suggested that individuals will modify their self concepts in the direction of the feedback they receive from others. Based on the notion that private self-consciousness is a general strategy of adaptation in the social world, the self concepts of 80 persons representing 4 types of private self-consciousness and either investigated high or low private self-consciousness and either high or medium to low social anxiety. Subjects responded to self-report questionnaires and were evaluated by friends. The socially poised, low private self-conscious subjects had the most positive general self esteem and reported the least amount of imagined embarrassment in situations where they supposedly committed socially clumsy acts. The results indicate that, in general, the tendency of low private self-conscious individuals to avoid self-awareness helps them maintain self concepts that are discrepant with what significant others think of them. (Author/JAC)

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PRIVATE SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS AS AN ADAPTATION STRATEGY*

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Private Self-Consciousness as an Adaptation Strategy

Self-concept is the totality of one's thoughts and feelings having reference to oneself as a social object, and includes social relationships, values and beliefs, and the understanding of one's past and present relationship with the environment. Put another way, self-concept is a "theory" that the individual constructs about himself or herself through social interaction (Epstein, 1973; Kelly, 1955). Each person's self-concept is a working compromise between his or her ideals and his or her actual, often imperfect, behavior.

A precondition for self-concept development is the ability to take oneself as an object of attention; i.e., the ability to engage in self-awareness. While human infants develop this ability during the second year of life (Amsterdam, 1972), Fenigstein, Scheier, and Buss (1975) have demonstrated that adults vary in their tendencies to engage in self-awareness and have called this personality characteristic self-consciousness. Private self-consciousness is one of two dimensions of self-consciousness measured by the Self-Consciousness Scale (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975), and reflects an awareness of one's attitudes, thoughts, feelings, and so on. In terms of self-definition, Turner's (1978) findings of high private self-conscious individuals listing more self-descriptive adjectives when describing themselves in comparison with those low in private self-consciousness, suggests that the former individuals' self-concepts are more articulated than those of the latter. This general self-reflective tendency has also been found to be related to greater self-knowledge (Scheier, Buss, & Buss, 1978), with further studies demonstrating that private self-awareness (Carver, 1975; Diener & Srull, 1979; Gibbons, 1978; Scheier, Fenigstein, & Buss, 1974) is associated

with a greater awareness of internalized social standards. Private self-awareness, then, may create a social perspective from which one's own behavior is evaluated, and individuals who are high in private self-consciousness may be more cognizant of the way others perceive them than those low on this self-reflective dimension.

Social anxiety, defined as the discomfort experienced in social interactions, is also measured by the Self-Consciousness Scale, but has been found not to be related to private self-consciousness (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975). Individual differences in social anxiety have been shown to mediate sensitivity to having evaluative public attention focused upon oneself (Turner, 1977) and to be negatively correlated with sociability (Carver & Glass, 1976; Turner, Scheier, Carver, & Ickes, 1978). Employing other social anxiety measures, a number of studies have found significant negative relationships between anxiety and levels of self-esteem, self-acceptance, or correspondence of actual self-concept and ideal self-concept (Bledsoe, 1964; Coopersmith, 1967; Guerney & Burton, 1963; Horowitz, 1962; Lundgren & Schwab, 1977; Many & Many, 1975; Rosenberg, 1965; Suinn & Hill, 1964). In social interaction, socially anxious individuals are more sensitive to embarrassment (e.g., McPeek & Cialdine, 1977) and appear to respond to evaluation with a modest self-presentation, whereas those who are socially poised seem to respond to evaluation with a favorable self-presentation (Arkin, Appelman, & Burger, 1980; Lepper, 1970). Social anxiety can also influence one's perceptions of an event. Arkin, et. al. (1980) found that socially anxious individuals, in contrast to "normal" subjects, assumed more personal responsibility for failure than for success, while Clark and Arkowitz (1978) found that socially anxious subjects were more negative about their social skills than

less socially anxious subjects. Thus, social anxiety is a negative hypersensitivity to one's own behavior. Socially anxious individuals can be thought of as those who, when self-aware, evaluate themselves with internalized negative perceptions, or, what has been termed a self-denigrating generalized other (Hewitt, 1979).

While it is known that people vary in the degree to which they take themselves as objects of attention and also differ in their degree of social anxiety (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975), no research has been devoted to learning more about the self-concepts of individuals who quantitatively differ in their habitual self-awareness and who also habitually experience different levels of anxiety in the self-aware state. The purpose of the present study was to investigate the self-concepts of individuals who were either high or low in private self-consciousness and either high or medium to low in social anxiety.[1]

Private Self-Consciousness as an Adaptation Strategy

In a number of studies it has been demonstrated that people will modify their self-concepts in the direction of the feedback they receive from others (Backman, Secord, & Pierce, 1963; Harvey, Kelley, & Shapiro, 1957; Maehr, Mensing, & Nafzger, 1962; Regan, Gosselink, Hubsch, & Ulsh, 1975; Videbeck, 1960). These investigations seem to suggest that self-concept is quite malleable. Yet to assert that one's extant self-concept can be affected by social feedback does not mean to suggest that the person is a passive pawn in a game of social labelling. Other research findings indicate that when people receive social feedback, they tend to interpret and react to it so as to verify their self-understandings. Swann and Read (1981), for example, found that people are more likely to attend to and remember social feedback that will

verify their self-concepts, rather than feedback that will lead to non-verification. Research by O'Banion and Arkowitz (1977) found that high socially anxious women selectively remembered negative information about themselves better than low socially anxious women, with no differences reported for memory of positive information. Further studies suggest that when individuals receive self-disconfirmatory feedback, they tend to dismiss it and those who deliver it as being inaccurate and untrustworthy, directly opposite to their reactions to self-confirmatory feedback (e.g., Crary, 1966; Markus, 1977; Shrauger & Lund, 1975; Swann & Read, in press). In line with these findings, one assumption underlying the present study was that individuals are active in the process of self-definition and that their degree of self-consciousness and social anxiety may be better understood if it was studied in relation to this activity.

Previous research has shown that when confronted with personal shortcomings which cannot be changed, people will avoid self-awareness (e.g., Carver, Blaney, & Scheier, 1979; Greenberg & Musham, 1981; Steenbarger & Alderman, 1979). These findings suggest that avoiding self-awareness is a common strategy employed in failure situations. Greenberg and Musham's (1981) findings further suggest that engaging in self-awareness is a common strategy employed in situations where the person is free of faults on some salient dimension. While these studies demonstrate that avoiding and seeking self-awareness can be associated with personal successes or failures in specific situations, differences found in habitual tendencies to self-reflect suggest that self-consciousness may be a general strategy of adaptation to the social world. White (1974) states that adaptation does not mean either a total triumph over the environment or a total surrender to it, but rather, a striving toward

acceptable compromise. If level of private self-consciousness can be thought of as an adaptation strategy, it was reasoned that by learning more about the self-concepts of subjects who differed in terms of private self-consciousness and/or social anxiety, this would provide possible explanations for their tendencies to either engage in or avoid self-reflection.

Based on the findings dealing with both private self-consciousness and social anxiety, it was expected that the subjects representing the four types of self-consciousness under study would differ along a number of dimensions. One dimension was the effect self-awareness has on one's situational self-esteem. While no general self-esteem differences were predicted between high and low private self-conscious individuals who were socially poised, it was predicted that these two types of self-consciousness would result in different reactions to social gaffes or embarrassing events. Modigliani (1971) found evidence to suggest that embarrassment reflects a loss of situational self-esteem that is precipitated by a perceived loss of situational public esteem. It was hypothesized that the socially poised, low private self-conscious individuals would report less embarrassment in hypothetical situations than would the socially poised, high private self-conscious individuals. This was predicted since the former group see themselves as socially poised, and further, since they are less likely to analyze their behavior in the incident. That is, faced with a situation in which one meets personal failure, the high private self-conscious person should, by habit, reflect upon his or her actions in the event, while the low private self-conscious person should avoid self-awareness. The former individual should experience a loss of situational self-esteem due to their self-awareness, while the latter individual's situational self-esteem should be less affected. Given the earlier discussion, it

was expected that socially anxious subjects, regardless of their level of private self-consciousness, would experience greater embarrassment than socially poised subjects. Even though the socially anxious low private self-conscious subjects do not generally self-reflect, in social situations they are painfully aware of themselves as social objects and perceive others evaluating them negatively. In a potentially embarrassing situation, their strategy of non-self-reflection should be ineffective.

A second question of interest was how would subjects' self-evaluations differ as a function of self-consciousness from the evaluations of individuals who knew them very well? In a recent study, Bernstein and Davis (in press) found that, following observation of high and low private self-conscious target persons, subjects were better able to match the former group with their self-descriptions than the latter group. Further, as observation time increased, the high private self-conscious targets were matched with their self-descriptions at an even higher rate, but no increase in accuracy was found for the low private self-conscious targets. This study, along with the research conducted by Scheier, Buss, and Buss (1978), indicates that high private self-conscious individuals understand themselves better than low private self-conscious individuals. Based on these results and following the line of argument that private self-awareness creates a social perspective from which one's own behavior is evaluated, differences in self-other ratings were expected between high and low private self-conscious subjects.

While private self-consciousness was expected to play a significant part in explaining these differences, level of social anxiety was expected to determine their evaluative direction. Specifically, it was predicted that the self-ratings of the socially poised, low private self-conscious subjects would

be more favorable than their friends' evaluations of them. Just as habitual non-self-reflection was expected to result in less embarrassment for these people, it was also predicted that, in the same manner, they would generally overlook the more negative aspects of themselves and provide very positive self-descriptions. Being socially poised, they would have a self-enhancing generalized other, and being non-self-reflective they would tend to overlook social feedback that contradicted their favorable self-concepts. Using this same logic, the socially anxious, low private self-conscious subjects were expected to rate themselves more negatively than their friends rated them. Being socially anxious, they would have a self-denigrating generalized other, and being non-self-reflective, they would tend to overlook social feedback that contradicted their unfavorable self-concepts. Since the high private self-conscious subjects were expected to be more cognizant of the way others perceived them, no subject-friend differences were predicted for either group. Even though the socially anxious, high private self-conscious subjects had a self-denigrating behavioral style, it was believed this tendency would be attenuated by their level of private self-consciousness.

Conceptual Replications of Previous Research

Private self-consciousness. Consistent with Turner's (1978) findings, it was predicted that high private self-conscious subjects, in contrast to low private self-conscious subjects, would check more adjectives on an adjective checklist in describing both what was generally characteristic of them and what was very characteristic. Further, since there is still some question concerning the relationship between self-consciousness and self-esteem (Brockner & Hulton, 1978), despite research indicating that increased private self-awareness is unaccompanied by negative self-affect (Carver & Scheier,

1978; Hull & Levy, 1979), it was predicted that high and low private self-conscious subjects would not differ on a general measure of self-esteem. Finally, based on previous research (Carver & Glass, 1976; Briggs, Cheek, & Buss, 1980), no differences were expected between private self-consciousness and measures of extraversion and orientation toward others.

Social anxiety. It was predicted that socially anxious subjects, in contrast to socially poised subjects, would have more negative general self-esteem (Lundgren & Schwab, 1977), would experience greater degrees of embarrassment (e.g., McPeek & Cialdine, 1977), and would evaluate themselves more negatively in contrast to friends' ratings of them (e.g., Arkin, Appelman, & Burger, 1980). Further, it was predicted that, when confronted with discrepancies between their self-evaluations and their friends' ratings of them, the socially anxious subjects would reject more positive evaluations than would the socially poised subjects (e.g., Arkin, Appelman, & Burger, 1980; O'Banion & Arkowitz, 1977). Finally, it was predicted that socially anxious subjects' self-concepts would be less stable than those of the socially poised subjects. While no previous research had directly tested this relationship, Rosenberg (1965) had found a positive relationship between self-concept stability and self-esteem, a variable strongly correlated with social anxiety.

Method

Subject Selection

From a pool of 563 undergraduate volunteers from the University of California at Davis who were pretested on the Self-Consciousness Scale, Self-Monitoring Scale (Snyder, 1974), Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1959), and Stability of Self Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), 40 males and 40 females were asked to participate in a study in which they would answer further questions concerning attitudes toward themselves and social events. Volunteers qualified for the second phase of the study by scoring one standard deviation either above or below the mean on private self-consciousness, scoring one standard deviation either above the mean or merely below the mean on social anxiety, and not exceeding one standard deviation above the mean on social desirability. Social desirability was added as a criterion measure because it was believed that one or two of the types of self-consciousness in the study were more socially desirable and, therefore, more susceptible to "faking good" subjects than the two less desirable types. Turkat (1978) has recommended the use of the Crowne and Marlowe Scale to identify such defensive high self-esteem persons. The Self-Monitoring Scale has been shown to be a multidimensional instrument (Briggs, Cheek, & Buss, 1980), measuring extraversion, other-directedness, and acting abilities. The Stability of Self Scale measures self-concept constancy or changeability, and has a coefficient of reproducibility of 94% and a coefficient of scalability of 77% (Rosenberg, 1965), with factor analysis revealing a unidimensional structure (Franzoi & Reddish, 1980).

Subjects scoring high on private self-consciousness and social anxiety were labeled socially anxious self-reflectives (SASR), those scoring low on

both were labeled socially poised non-self-reflectives (SPNSR), those scoring high on private self-consciousness but low on social anxiety were labeled socially poised self-reflectives (SPSR), and those scoring low on private self-consciousness but high on social anxiety were labeled socially anxious non-self-reflectives (SANSR). The four groups resulting from this selection procedure each consisted of 10 females and 10 males. Of those subjects who were contacted for the second phase of the study, only one declined to participate. In all phases of the study following the initial group testing, subjects were administered questionnaires and were interviewed individually. For their participation, subjects received extra credit points in their psychology courses and an interpretation of their questionnaire responses.

Differential Representation of Self-Consciousness Types

Of the 563 subjects initially tested, 40% qualified for the second phase of the study prior to analyzing their social desirability scores. Following that analysis, 14% of these subjects exceeded the minimum criterion score level, and thus were dropped from further consideration. Upon analysis, significant differences were found between the four groups in the percentage of subjects disqualified due to high social desirability scores ($x^2 = 8.49$, 1 d.f., $p < .005$); 21.3% of the SPNSR, 14% of the SPSR, 9% of the SASR, and 8% of the SANSR. The four groups were also found to be disproportionately represented in the population tested, with the two socially poised groups having a greater number than the socially anxious groups ($x^2 = 28.92$, 1 d.f., $p < .001$); 14% of the SPNSR, 12% of the SPSR, 6% of the SASR, and 7% of the SANSR.

Procedure

Upon arrival, subjects were seated at a desk with a cassette tape player. Subjects listened and responded to four imaginary incidents in which something potentially embarrassing occurred involving the individual subject. Subjects imagined themselves in the situations and then indicated how embarrassed they would feel if such a thing happened to them. Following are the four imaginary incidents:

1. You are at a party talking to a group of people unaware that the zipper on your jeans is open. As the host walks by, he catches sight of your appearance and, in his surprise, spills the food tray he is carrying all over the floor. Your host then tells you about your zipper. To what degree would you be embarrassed?
2. You go to see a professor about your standing in her class and she offers you a chair while you talk. During the conversation, you lean back in the chair so that the front legs are raised. Suddenly, the chair's legs slip out from under you and you crash to the floor. As you get up the professor tells you the chair is defective. To what degree would you be embarrassed?
3. You are in the supermarket pushing a cart down an aisle and you meet a friend going in the opposite direction. After talking briefly, you both continue on your way. A few seconds after you part company, your friend calls to you. As you turn your head in the direction of your friend, your cart strikes a display and hundreds of items tumble to the floor. To what degree would you be embarrassed?
4. You are at a friend's house for dinner with a small group of people. While you are drinking refreshments, you tell a story to the others

present. In the middle of the story, you pause for a swallow of your drink but miss your mouth entirely and spill the contents of the glass on yourself. When the laughter subsides and the others have stopped "ribbing" you, everyone notices that the tacos on the stove are burning because they have fried a minute too long. To what degree would you be embarrassed?

The dependent measure was degree of imagined embarrassment. To control for possible order effects, the order of incident presentation was varied across subjects. As a further precaution, tapes with a male and with a female voice were also varied across subjects.

When subjects responded to all four incidents, they were then escorted to another room and seated at a desk with a second cassette tape player. Here, subjects listened and responded to the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), a questionnaire on body attitudes, and two questionnaires having to do with famous people and current events.[2] The Rosenberg scale, having a coefficient of reproducibility of 92% and a coefficient of scalability of 72% (Rosenberg, 1965), appears to measure general self-esteem (Hensley & Roberts, 1976). When subjects completed the questionnaires, the experimenter escorted them back to the original testing room, gave them the Adjective Check List (Gough & Heilbrun, 1965) and asked them to check those adjectives that were self-descriptive. Upon completion of this task they were asked to scan the checked adjectives and to single out those that were "very descriptive." Prior to leaving the office, subjects were given a second blank Adjective Check List (ACL) in a stamped, self-addressed envelope and were told to give it to someone who knew them very well. In the envelopes were instructions for the friends to describe the subjects. The friends were also asked to indicate on

a nine-point scale how well they were acquainted with the subjects. When the envelopes were returned, subjects were called back for an interview and confronted with the discrepancies in the two descriptions and were asked to affirm or deny the adjectives that were discrepant.

In order to test differences between subjects' self-evaluations and friends' evaluations of them, the Creativity scale derived from the ACL (Gough, 1979) was employed at this stage in the analysis. The Creativity scale was used as a measure of self-favorability because of the preponderance of positive adjectives associated with a high creativity score. The scale is comprised of 18 positive items (e.g., capable, clever, humorous, intelligent, resourceful, sexy) and 12 negative items (e.g., affected, commonplace, conventional, interests narrow, submissive), with an average alpha coefficient across samples of .76 (Gough, 1979).

In order to determine the evaluative direction of the individual adjectives upon which the subjects and their friends did not agree as being descriptive of the subject, 104 male and female undergraduate judges rated all 300 adjectives on the checklist as being either a positive, negative, or neutral description of a person in our society. To be considered a positive description, an adjective had to receive positive ratings by at least 80% of the judges. The same criterion applied for a negative label. This rating procedure resulted in 96 positive and 71 negative adjectives.

Results

Embarrassment

No gender differences were found in the study, and thus, male and female data were reported together. Regarding imagined embarrassment, as expected, there was a significant main effect for social anxiety, with the socially anxious subjects reporting greater degrees of embarrassment ($\bar{x}$ = 7.02 vs. $\bar{x}$ = 5.74, $F_{(1,72)}$ = 19.30, $p < .001$). There also was a significant interaction effect ($F_{(1,72)}$ = 11.24, $p < .005$), and when this was explored, the SPNSR group, as predicted, expressed less embarrassment than the SPSR group ($\bar{x}$ = 5.01 vs. $\bar{x}$ = 6.46, $t_{(72)}$ = 3.53, $p < .001$). Interestingly, the SPSR group's embarrassment scores, while slightly lower than the SASR group's scores, were not significantly different ($\bar{x}$ = 6.46 vs. $\bar{x}$ = 6.77, $t_{(72)}$ = .36), indicating that the substantial main effect differences for social anxiety were due solely to the SPNSR group's low reported embarrassment scores.[3]

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Insert Table 1 about here

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General Self-Esteem

On Rosenberg's scale, there was a marginally significant interaction effect ($F_{(1,72)}$ = 3.63, p = .06), which, upon further analysis, revealed that the SPNSR group had higher general self-esteem than the SPSR group ($\bar{x}$ = 25.35 vs $\bar{x}$ = 22.45, $F_{(1,72)}$ = 4.75, $p < .05$). As predicted, socially anxious subjects indicated lower general self-esteem than socially poised subjects ($\bar{x}$ = 17.83 vs. $\bar{x}$ = 23.90, $F_{(1,72)}$ = 47.48, $p < .001$), with no differences due to private self-consciousness ($F_{(1,72)}$ = 1.38, $p > .20$).

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Insert Table 2 about here

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Subject-Friend Ratings

No group differences were found in the degree to which the friends stated how well they were acquainted with the subjects. There was a significant three-way interaction effect between private self-consciousness, social anxiety, and type of rater ($F_{(1,72)} = 5.49$, $p < .05$). The SPNSR group, as predicted, tended to rate themselves more positively than their friends rated them ($\bar{x} = 6.30$ vs. $\bar{x} = 4.60$, $t_{(72)} = 1.68$, $p = .10$), while the SANSR group rated themselves more negatively than their friends rated them ($\bar{x} = 0.20$ vs. $\bar{x} = 2.55$, $t_{(72)} = 2.31$, $p < .05$). In both high private self-conscious groups, there was little discrepancy between the subjects' self-ratings and their friends' ratings of them; as expected, subject-friend discrepancies were apparent only in the low private self-conscious groups. There was also a marginal interaction effect between social anxiety and subject-friend ratings ($F_{(1,72)} = 3.25$, $p < .10$). Upon analysis, it was found that, while the friends' ratings of the socially anxious subjects were more positive than those given by the subjects themselves, ($\bar{x} = 1.70$ vs. $\bar{x} = 3.20$, $t_{(72)} = 2.09$, $p < .05$), they were still significantly less positive than the ratings given to the socially poised subjects by their friends ($\bar{x} = 5.43$ vs. $\bar{x} = 3.20$, $t_{(72)} = 3.10$, $p < .01$).

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Insert Table 3 about here

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Self-Concept Articulation

As predicted, the high private self-conscious subjects checked more adjectives than the low private self-conscious subjects ($\bar{x}$ = 121.79 vs. $\bar{x}$ = 98.39, $F_{(1,72)}$ = 7.55, $p < .01$). Further support for the differences between the high and the low private self-conscious groups on this dimension, comes from the greater number of very descriptive adjectives checked by the former subjects in contrast to the latter subjects ($\bar{x}$ = 65.48 vs. $\bar{x}$ = 51.30, $F_{(1,72)}$ = 5.13, $p < .05$). Unexpectedly, there was a tendency for the friends of the high private self-conscious subjects to check more adjectives in describing them than did the friends of the low private self-conscious subjects ($\bar{x}$ = 99.10 vs. $\bar{x}$ = 86.89, $F_{(1,72)}$ = 2.93, $p < .10$). There were no differences in the number of adjectives checked due to level of social anxiety.

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Insert Table 4 about here

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Self-Concept Stability

When the Stability of Self Scale was analyzed, as expected, the socially anxious subjects' self-concepts were found to be less stable than the self-concepts of the socially poised subjects ($\bar{x}$ = 26.0 vs. $\bar{x}$ = 20.9, $F_{(1,72)}$ = 6.23, $p < .05$). Unexpectedly, the high private self-conscious subjects scored lower on self-concept stability than did the low private self-conscious subjects ($\bar{x}$ = 21.1 vs. $\bar{x}$ = 25.8, $F_{(1,72)}$ = 5.29, $p < .05$).

Self-Monitoring

Only two factors on the Self-Monitoring Scale, extraversion and other-directedness, were of interest in the present study. As hypothesized,

socially poised subjects scored higher on the extraversion factor than did the socially anxious subjects ($\bar{x}$ = 4.9 vs. $\bar{x}$ = 2.2, $F_{(1,72)} = 62.33$, $p < .001$), with no differences found on the other-directedness factor. Private self-consciousness was not associated with either variable.

Self-Concept Change

Eight subjects, two from each group, did not participate in this stage of the study due to the end of the school year. Using the judges' ratings list of positive adjectives, subjects were compared as to the differences between the number of positive adjectives comprising their initial self-descriptions and the number comprising their self-descriptions following the confrontation with their friends' assessments of them. Results indicated that subjects' central self-concept characteristics were more resistant to change than less central characteristics ($F_{(1,68)} = 110.32$, $p < .001$), with only 3.3% of the contested very descriptive adjectives changed in comparison to 15.3% of the contested merely descriptive adjectives. As predicted, the socially anxious subjects accepted a lower percentage of their friends' positive descriptions of them than did the socially poised subjects ($\bar{x}$ = 59.03% vs. $\bar{x}$ = 73.13%, $F_{(1,68)} = 11.78$, $p < .005$). No differences were found for private self-consciousness or for the interaction of the two variables. While socially anxious subjects were reluctant to accept positive descriptions, there was a significant shift across all subjects toward more favorable self-descriptions following the subjects' confrontations with their friends' ratings of them ($F_{(1,68)} = 39.18$, $p < .001$, and $F_{(1,68)} = 5.28$, $p < .05$, respectively, for the positive and negative adjectives).

Discussion

Social Anxiety

Taken as a whole the data suggest that social anxiety and social poise are associated with a self-denigrating and self-enhancing generalized other, respectively. Consistently throughout the study, the socially poised groups and the socially anxious groups were distinguishable in the manner with which they gave themselves favorable and unfavorable ratings. Since subjects were aware that their self-assessments would be evaluated by the researcher and that they would later discuss their self-reports with him, these differences in the favorability of self-ratings are similar to the results obtained by Arkin et. al. (1980) and Lepper (1970). As in those studies, socially anxious subjects provided a modest self-presentation, possibly reflecting an attempt to avoid embarrassment, whereas, socially poised subjects tended to provide a favorable self-presentation, perhaps reflecting an attempt to win approval rather than avoid embarrassment. This does not mean to suggest, however, that the socially poised subjects had a greater need to obtain approval, but rather, that they may have been more comfortable in seeking it than the socially anxious subjects. This interpretation is supported by the fact that these two groups did not differ on the other-directedness measure. Since this measure consists of items emphasizing pleasing others, conforming to the social situation, and masking one's true feelings (Briggs, Cheek, & Buss, 1980), it is doubtful that the socially poised subjects had a greater need to obtain approval from others. Yet these differences between the socially anxious and the socially poised subjects cannot be explained solely in terms of attempts to avoid embarrassment or win approval, for the friends of the latter group rated them more favorably than did the friends of the former group. It

appears that even though friends of socially anxious individuals think better of them than they do of themselves, they do indeed perceive them in a somewhat unfavorable light.

While all subjects' self-descriptions became more favorable once they were confronted with their friends' descriptions of them, the socially anxious subjects were much less willing to accept their friends' positive descriptions of them. The fact that subjects' self-descriptions became more favorable when confronted with positive self-descriptions from others should be reassuring to advocates of self-enhancement theories, which argue that people have a need to increase their feelings of personal worth and value. Yet there appears to be an important caveat to the theory: the need to increase personal worth and value will be moderated by the person's own need to maintain his or her extant self-concept. Central self-descriptive adjectives were very seldom relinquished by subjects, no matter what their level of social anxiety or private self-consciousness. Maintenance of one's self-concept, thus, seems to be a potent motivating force, even stronger than the desire to enhance one's own esteem. These results are in line with previous research indicating that people are more likely to attend to and remember social feedback that verifies their self-concepts than feedback that does not (e.g., Shrauger & Lund, 1975; Swann & Read, 1981). Yet again, the fact that the socially anxious subjects did accept some of the positive descriptions given by their friends, and thereby, in a sense, contradicting their own self-evaluations, may explain why their self-concepts were less stable than the socially poised subjects. Socially anxious persons, in realizing that some specific individuals view them more favorably than they themselves do, may begin to second-guess their own negative self-theories.

Private Self-Consciousness

Consistent with past research (Turner, 1978), high private self-conscious subjects had more articulated self-concepts than did the low private self-conscious subjects. An unexpected finding was that the friends of the high private self-conscious subjects tended to use more adjectives in describing them than did the friends of the low private self-conscious subjects. While private self-consciousness involves an awareness of the more covert aspects of oneself, the findings here suggest that the resultant degree of self-concept articulation is something of which close friends are cognizant.

Individuals low in private self-consciousness appear to have more stable self-concepts than those who are highly self-reflective. Unlike past research which has investigated stability of self-concept (Rosenberg, 1965), the present study found no self-esteem differences between these two groups. Rosenberg found that, although stability is a "contributory factor" in accounting for the relationship between self-esteem and anxiety, it does not appear to be a very powerful factor. A better explanation of this finding comes from an analysis of the five items comprising the Stability of Self Scale. All items are geared toward people who analyze themselves on a regular basis (e.g., "Do you ever find that on one day you have one opinion of yourself and on another day you have a different opinion?" "I have noticed that my ideas about myself seem to change very quickly."). People high in private self-consciousness are more aware of their own thoughts and feelings (Buss & Scheier, 1976) and are more aware of their dominant affect (Scheier & Carver, 1977) than are persons low in private self-consciousness. These differences in awareness of internal states suggest that non-self-reflectives have more stable self-concepts, not because of more positive self-esteem or lower anx-

iety levels, but rather, because they do not attend to themselves as often as do self-reflectives, and thus, have fewer opportunities to notice self-inconsistencies or contradictory self-images. When they do self-reflect, their self-concepts are less articulated and less complex, i.e., simpler and more stable.

When discussing private self-consciousness, it is important to note non-significant results as well, for they indicate a lack of association between habitual self-reflection and negative personal attributes. For example, as in past studies (Carver & Glass, 1976; Briggs, et. al., 1980), private self-consciousness was not negatively associated with extraversion, indicating that high private self-conscious individuals, while generally introspective, can also be socially outgoing. A second example involves self-esteem. As in other studies, the present findings indicate that when self-esteem differences are found, private self-consciousness alone will not explain them. Habitual self-reflection is not necessarily associated with self-denigration, nor is non-self-reflection necessarily associated with self-enhancement.

Private Self-Consciousness and Social Anxiety

By focusing upon private self-consciousness, it was confirmed that individuals differ in their self-concept complexity. By focusing upon social anxiety, it was confirmed that individuals are active in the process of self-definition, rejecting positive social feedback if it does not fit their self-theories. Yet, alone, these two variables only reveal so much; together, they provide new insights into the nature of self-consciousness.

Consistent with initial predictions, the socially poised non-self-reflectives (SPNSR), that is, those subjects low in both social anxiety and private self-consciousness, reported the least amount of imagined

embarrassment in situations where they supposedly committed socially clumsy acts. Since these persons had a belief in themselves as socially poised, and further, since they were less likely to analyze their behavior in the incident, their nonplussed reactions are understandable. The compound effect of these two personal qualities minimizes loss of situational self-esteem in social interaction where others feel more vulnerable and off-balance. Subjects high in private self-consciousness but low in social anxiety, the socially poised self-reflectives (SPSR), reported similar embarrassment levels as the socially anxious subjects. While the SPSR subjects reported positive general self-esteem, it appears that their tendency to be more aware of their own thoughts and feelings results in a significantly greater loss of situational self-esteem when they are involved in social gaffes than their non-self-reflective counterparts.

The SPNSR subjects not only reported less embarrassment than the SPSR subjects, but also reported higher general self-esteem. Yet, while their general self-esteem was higher, their friends tended not to completely verify the positive self-ratings of the SPNSR group. This group was the only one in the study in which their own self-descriptions were more positive than their friends' descriptions of them. In the larger sample of 563 people, the SPNSR subjects had the highest percentage of individuals scoring high in social desirability. Based on this accumulated evidence, it is suggested that, in general, these people overlook negative self-information more than the other individuals who have different types of self-consciousness. Since all subjects in the main body of the present study were screened for defensive high self-esteem, the slightly higher self-esteem and lower self-reports of embarrassment by the SPNSR group may reflect the more subtle aspects of this adap-

tation strategy.

Turning to the socially anxious non-self-reflective (SANSR) group, these persons consistently scored low on various measures of self-esteem and reported high levels of imagined embarrassment, similar to their self-reflective counterparts, the socially anxious self-reflectives (SASR). Both groups had negative self-concepts, but the SASR group's self-concepts were more articulated and a bit in flux, while the SANSR individuals' self-concepts were not well articulated, but were relatively stable (or fixed). These two types of persons, both have self-denigrating generalized others, but the SANSR individuals have adopted a strategy of self-avoidance, while the SASR individuals have adopted a strategy where they habitually confront themselves with their perceived self-deficiencies. As one SANSR subject stated: "I really don't want to understand myself because its no good to know yourself too well." The SASR individuals, in contrast, are habitually self-reflecting, and thus, there is a greater likelihood that their self-concepts will change over time, possibly toward a more favorable self-assessment.[4]

While both socially anxious groups had negative self-concepts, the SANSR subjects' self-evaluations were significantly more negative than their friends evaluations of them, something not found in the SASR group. This subject-friend discrepancy was also found in the SPNSR group, except in the opposite direction. Both high private self-conscious groups, then, evaluated themselves more in line with their friends' evaluations of them than did the two low private self-conscious groups. These results suggest that people who regularly engage in private self-awareness not only have more articulated self-concepts, but also, have self-evaluations that are more similar to significant others' evaluations of them, regardless of their evaluative direction. This

finding is consistent with previous research (Bernstein & Davis, in press; Scheier, Buss, & Buss, 1978), indicating that high private self-conscious individuals know themselves better than do low private self-conscious individuals. A strategy of habitual self-reflection then, may result in individuals being more cognizant of others' perceptions of them, possibly due to private self-awareness creating a social perspective from which their own behaviors are evaluated (e.g., Diener & Srull, 1979). Both the socially poised and the socially anxious non-self-reflectives, on the other hand, have developed a strategy where avoiding self-evaluation helps them to maintain self-concepts that are discrepant with what significant others think of them.

Associating self-evaluation with social evaluation is not new, but reflects a longstanding tradition in symbolic interaction theory (e.g., Mead, 1934; Stryker, 1980). What self-awareness theory adds to the symbolic interactionist perspective is the notion that individuals differ in the degree to which they engage in self-evaluation. By conceptualizing private self-consciousness as an adaptation strategy, the present study has attempted to provide possible explanations for these differences. Future work in this area should explore the developmental influences on tendencies to engage in or avoid self-awareness, and should examine, in greater detail, the relationship between self-awareness and social awareness.

Reference Notes

1. Franzoi, S. L., & Shields, S. A. Multidimensionality of body concept. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Psychological Association, Los Angeles, California, August 1981.

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Footnotes

[1]Public self-consciousness is the third factor in the Self-Consciousness Scale and reflects not just an awareness of oneself as a social object, but a concern about others judgments (e.g., I'm concerned about what other people think of me; I'm concerned about my style of doing things; I'm concerned about the way I present myself; I usually worry about making a good impression; I'm self-conscious about the way I look). People who endorse these items are concerned about their appearance, style of behavior, and in general, about the impression they make on others. Since the aim of the research was to study subjects who were either high or low in self-reflection and either high or low in anxiety levels, and further, because the public self-consciousness subscale, unlike the other two factors, combines both awareness of and concern for others' judgments, it was believed the use of the subscale as a criterion measure would confound the analysis. Thus, it was not employed in subject selection.

[2]Questionnaire responses regarding attitudes toward famous people and current events were not of relevance to the present study, and thus, were not analyzed. Body-Cathexis Scale (Secord & Jourard, 1953) scores also were not reported, as a recent study (Franzoi & Shields, Note 1) has cast doubt on the usefulness of the scale as a measure of body esteem.

[3]It was believed that if public self-consciousness was a factor in the present study, it would be most apparent during the embarrassing situations. To rule out the possibility that these differences were due to public self-consciousness, subjects were separated into a high and a low public self-conscious grouping using a median split (four subjects at the

midpoint were dropped from the analysis). When their embarrassment scores were compared, no differences were found between the highs and the lows ($\bar{x}$ =6.64 vs. $\bar{x}$ = 6.11, respectively, $t_{(68)} = 1.46$, $p > .10$).

[4]When self-concept stability was analyzed, while the interaction effect of private self-consciousness and social anxiety was not significant, there was an identical trend in both males and females for the SASR subjects to have less stable self-concepts than the SANSR subjects ($\bar{x}$ = 19.6 vs. $\bar{x}$ = 22.3). Using this same measure, Rosenberg (1965) found that the least stability was found among those who have rather low self=esteem, but not the lowest. Thus, the SASR's negative self-concept may be less fixed than the SANSR's self-concept, and more open to a less negative redefinition.

Table 1

Imagined Embarrassment Differences

	High Private Self-Consciousness	Low Private Self-Consciousness
Low Social Anxiety	$\bar{X} = 6.46_{a}$ sd = 1.67	$\bar{X} = 5.01_{abc}$ sd = 1.29
High Social Anxiety	$\bar{X} = 6.77_{b}$ sd = 1.46	$\bar{X} = 7.26_{c}$ sd = 1.04

Note. The score range is from 1.00 to 9.00, with higher scores indicating greater embarrassment. Means sharing a common subscript are significantly different at the .05 level or beyond. In each cell, n = 20.

Table 2

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Differences

	High Private Self-Consciousness	Low Private Self-Consciousness
Low Social Anxiety	$\bar{X}$ = 22.45 sd = 4.07 $_{a}$	$\bar{X}$ = 25.35 $_{ab}$ sd = 3.91
High Social Anxiety	$\bar{X}$ = 18.15 $_{a}$ sd = 3.66	$\bar{X}$ = 17.50 $_{b}$ sd = 4.30

Note. The score range is from 0.00 to 30.00, with higher scores indicating more positive self-esteem. Means sharing a common subscript are significantly different at the .05 level or beyond. In each cell, n = 20.

Table 3

Creativity Rating Differences

	High Private Self-Conscious subject	High Private Self-Conscious friend	Low Private Self-Conscious subject	Low Private Self-Conscious friend
Low Social Anxiety	X = 5.20 $_{a}$ sd = 2.91	X = 6.25 sd = 3.86	X = 6.30 $_{bc}$ sd = 2.85	X = 4.60 $_{c}$ sd = 3.66
High Social Anxiety	X = 3.20 sd = 4.09 ^{a}	X = 3.85 sd = 4.57	X = 0.20 sd = 3.75 ^{abd}	X = 2.55 sd = 2.95 ^{d}

Note. The score range is from -12 to +18, with higher scores indicating more positive self-favorability. Means sharing a common subscript are significantly different at the .05 level or beyond, except for subscript "c," which is significant at the .10 level. In each cell, n = 20.

Table 4

Number of Adjectives Checked

	Subjects	Friends
High Private Self-Consciousness	$\bar{X}$ = 121.79 [a] sd = 41.32	$\bar{X}$ = 99.10 [b] sd = 37.44
Low Private Self-Consciousness	$\bar{X}$ = 98.39 sd = 33.64 [a]	$\bar{X}$ = 86.89 sd = 27.20 [b]

Note. Means sharing subscript "a" are significant at the .01 level, while means sharing subscript "b" are significant at the .10 level. In each cell, n = 40.